

Racist Clicks haircare campaign leads to backlash and picketing

Health and beauty retailer Clicks is facing significant public backlash after a TRESemmé marketing campaign that appeared on the Clicks website was accused of promoting racist stereotypes about hair.



The images used in the campaign labelled the hair belonging to Black women as 'dry and damaged' and 'frizzy and dull', while a white woman's straight blonde hair was labelled 'normal hair'. The images were widely shared and criticised on social media, with 'Clicks' trending on Twitter since Friday.

“ Not only is this disrespectful to black lives, it is also evidence of an absence of representation and diversity within the organization. And we are talking about a South Africa with a population of about 80% black people (stand to be corrected). No ways [@Clicks_SA https://t.co/HWtfH40HCY](https://t.co/HWtfH40HCY)— Zozibini Tunzi (@zozitunzi) September 4, 2020 ”

With an expanding range of haircare brands targeted at natural African hair, Clicks has become a go-to retailer for curly- and kinky-haired consumers shopping for suitable haircare products. The retailer has also hosted [Clicks Curls](#) expos with the purpose of celebrating natural hair and showcasing its extensive product offering.

Both Clicks and TRESemmé, who supplied the images for the campaign, have since issued apologies. The TRESemmé statement on the Unilever website reads, "We are very sorry that images used in a TRESemmé South Africa marketing campaign on the Clicks website promote racist stereotypes about hair. The campaign set out to celebrate the beauty of all hair types and the range of solutions that TRESemmé offers, but we got it wrong. The images are not in line with the values of our brand, or of Clicks.

"TRESemmé South Africa apologises for the offence these images have caused. We also apologise to the Clicks group. We are looking into how this happened and why it wasn't picked up, and we will take all necessary steps to make sure it doesn't happen again."

In an apology posted on Twitter, Clicks said, "We would like to issue an unequivocal apology. We have removed the images which go against everything we believe in. We do not condone racism and we are strong advocates of natural hair. We are deeply sorry and will put in place stricter measures on our website.

"We have made a mistake and sincerely apologise for letting you down. We recognise we have a role to play in creating a more diverse and inclusive S.A, starting with our website content. We know we need to do better, and commit to ensuring our content better reflects this value."

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EFF shutdown

Despite the apologies, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has mobilised its members to forcibly shut down all Clicks stores across the country, saying that the campaign should be regarded as a human rights violation and a perpetuation of the violence of colonialism and racism. "Fellow fighters and ground forces; ATTACK!!!" said Julius Malema in a tweet on Sunday afternoon.

“ *@Clicks_SA see you tomorrow. Fellowfighters and ground forces; ATTACK!!!*— Julius Sello Malema (@Julius_S_Malema) [September 6, 2020](#) ”

The EFF also demanded the following:

- That Clicks Publicly list the names of all the Clicks directors and employees who were involved in the commissioning of the said advert.
- That all people who were involved in the commissioning of the advert in question, whether they be employees of Clicks or independent contractors be dismissed with immediate effect.
- Publicly list the name of service providers or contractors who commissioned the advert in question.
- Publicly list the names of all directors of the company that commissioned the advert.
- That the contracted company which commissioned the advert must have its contract terminated with immediate effect.

“ *Deputy Secretary-General @mailola_poppy is outside Clicks at Highveld Mall, Emalahleni.*

We are shutting down all 880 Clicks outlets across the country from Monday 7 September 2020 to Friday 11 September 2020.#ClicksMustFall pic.twitter.com/D4aM1i4okY— Economic Freedom Fighters (@EFFSouthAfrica) [September 7, 2020](#) ”

Pictures posted by the EFF's official social media accounts show members protesting inside and outside Clicks stores across the country today. A Clicks at Saveways Centre in Emalahleni (Witbank) was also petrol-bombed on Monday morning, however no injuries or serious damage has been reported.

“ *Clicks Witbank petrol bombed. pic.twitter.com/XF07POyMET— Yusuf Abramjee (@Abramjee) [September 7,](#)*

2020 ”

Another image [posted on Twitter](#) shows smashed windows at the Clicks Alberton store.

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